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HB 5208: *An Act Concerning Expedited Permitting for Economic Development*

Good morning Chairman LeBeau, Chairman Berger, Senator Frantz, Representative Alberts and members of the Commerce Committee. I am here to express my support for House Bill 5208 *An Act Concerning Expedited Permitting for Economic Development*.

It is our instinct as lawmakers to constantly ask, "What can we do to help?" How can we create a new program, or where can we find some seed money to jumpstart an industry or business. If done right, these things can be helpful. But, with budget deficits as far as the eye can see, we just don't have the money to make a real, meaningful impact with these types of programs.

HB 5208 is a different approach and one answer to a very different question: "How can we in government get out of the way?"

Most licenses and permits may not cost that much compared to other business expenses. But, the mere mention of the word "permit" makes all of us cringe because probably no other word better conjures up all that is wrong with government: lines of people, 30 to 90-day waits, inspections, re-inspections, and of course the \$50, \$100, or \$200 fee to top it off. If we can't repeal some of the licenses and permits required by the state, we can at least responsibly speed up the process for getting them.

This bill as submitted will require the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development to establish teams to expedite the review of permit applications for certain economic development projects. The teams will be established when projects create at least 100 jobs, create at least 50 jobs in an enterprise zone or are located in brownfields. Municipalities may also request the Commissioner of DECD to establish a team to expedite the permit process if the project would create a minimum of 10 jobs that meet certain criteria.

HB 5208 will help streamline the permitting process for economic development projects and ensure that projects are approved as quickly as possible. Many economic development projects are held up for long periods of time due to a complicated permitting process. These delays can severely slow down progress of projects that would benefit local economic development and job growth.

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We all understand that the permitting process serves an important function in the checks and balances of economic development projects. Connecticut must find some common ground that ensures proper checks while moving projects forward that will create business and job growth.

By now, we all know the statistics, and unfortunately this is the reputation of Connecticut that businesses see:

- the "least business friendly" state according to Expansion Management Magazine
- the 5th most costly state to do business according to the Milken Institute and The Connecticut Business and Industry Association.
- 94,000 jobs lost during this recession
- dead last in job growth since 1989 among all states.

Will HB 5208 change this overnight? Certainly not. But, this recession is a journey for all of us, and the journey starts with the first step.

On behalf of the House Republican Caucus, I would like to thank the Chairs for raising HB 5208, which is similar to a proposal that we submitted to the Commerce Committee. This is a common-sense proposal. I hope the Committee will support it, and I will do all I can to ensure that it becomes law.

I look forward to working with the Committee and General Assembly in crafting a proposal that will get us back to work.

If you have any questions, I would be happy to take them now.